

# Dance: Rina Schenfeld In Three Long Solos

By ANNA KISSELGOFF

**S**OMETHING different even within a series designed to be different is what the Israeli dancer Rina Schenfeld is presenting this weekend as part of the Brooklyn Academy of Music's experimental "Next Wave" programs.

Miss Schenfeld, who opened Wednesday night, is the only solo dancer in these events, and she also works well outside the formalist concerns of the American dance avant-garde. In three long solos, she manipulates objects that give each dance its name — "Threads," "Silk," "Sticks" — and creates a multilevel essay that is clever, often poetic.

At her best, Miss Schenfeld takes us into a rarefied dream atmosphere, where the most prosaic objects become wondrous. And just as surprisingly, she can make the wondrous turn ordinary: a luxuriant silk cloak suddenly loses its shimmering sensuousness and is folded up into a mere napkin to be carried over an arm, waiter-style. The same fabric, once vibrated up into the air like angels' wings, becomes a shroud for an ugly Expressionist figure.

Miss Schenfeld's transformations, hence, take on a philosophical meaning, raising questions about essences. These are dances to ponder and yet at the same time the mechanics of her method are presented openly.

We see her step on elastic ribbons and attach them to her feet and to four poles to form the web within which she dances in "Threads." We see her curve a pair of flexible sticks in "Sticks" and know how she achieves her designs in space.

In short, we are witness to both the process and the creative result. Looking more closely, we find that the objects themselves are not enough to create a specific effect or shape. Rather, it is the kind of movement Miss Schenfeld performs that helps form the shape. If she is jiggling, standing, running, rocking, the object changes according to how it is moved. Miss Schenfeld knows how to use the specific properties of her props and reveals more of their attributes than is at first apparent.

It would be easy to suggest that Miss Schenfeld is merely involved in a variant of Alwin Nikolais's work with objects as extensions of a dancer's body or with his identification of humans with their environment. It is even more evident that Miss Schenfeld owes a conscious debt to Oskar Schlemmer's Bauhaus dances of the 1920's — especially in "Sticks."

Nonetheless, her dances do not look the same as their antecedents. She keeps the human figure always visible and she is, as ever, a serenely beautiful dancer of great intensity, the magnetic focus of attention. Each flutter or flicker of her fingers seems invested with meaning of some sort, never literal and all the more tantalizing because of its mystery.

Moreover, Miss Schenfeld's past as Israel's leading exponent of Martha Graham's technique and art in the Batsheva Dance Company is not completely shed here. Her current work, after leaving Batsheva in 1977, seems an extreme reaction against the Graham esthetic. And yet her own designs in space are never completely abstract, and the expression of emotion through movement explains the unstated drama in these solos.

All three of these use electronic scores and well-integrated lighting designs. "Silk" despite imaginative high points, was too long and the least successful. The Israeli composer Menachem Zur, however, created an attractive nature-sound score, with cricketlike bursts and distant voices. Roderick van Gelder did the dramatic changeable lighting.

"Sticks" was the best and most inventive solo, danced albeit almost irrelevantly to Steve Reich's repetitive music. Unlike the other solos, it was a consistently happy and playful dance, almost childlike in its building of imaginary imagery. At several points, Miss Schenfeld turned into mythical creatures — lying on her back with the willowy poles curving out from between her toes, and springing up to stand on the sticks as if they were skis. At another point the sticks became antennae or curved out of both ears. In Bauhaus style, they could also be bent into quadrants around her revolving body, ellipses or hoops that framed her.

Miss Schenfeld would occasionally dance away from the props, and even if her choreography has a highly restricted scope, this was a pleasant surprise. In "Threads," for example, she spent most of her time tied to the elastic ribbons that attached her to four poles designed by Ziva Liebllich. Igor Wakhevitch composed the score, which vibrated and plunged and rose in sound. The ribbons, too, could be made to vibrate in simulated multiple exposure, strobe-light effects without strobes and crystal shapes.